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ABSTRACT

This reference list was compiled to offer Maine librarians who serve communities with the resources of small- or medium-sized libraries a starting point to assess their reference collections for breadth and depth. Initially based on a list distributed by the Vermont Department of Libraries in 1987, this guide evaluates reference materials on the basis of their timeliness, effectiveness in responding to frequently asked questions, and reasonable cost. It is recommended that reference works be chosen using the same standards as for other nonfiction--i.e., currency, accuracy, authoritativeness, and ease of use. Librarians are also advised to analyze the particular needs of their community's information users before selecting books from this list. Each entry includes the book's title and author, other bibliographic information, availability (where appropriate), and cost. Three basic tools that can answer many common reference questions are highlighted: a multi-volume encyclopedia, a current world almanac, and an all-purpose dictionary. Seventeen other basic reference works are also described, including maps, telephone directories, and books of quotations. Sixteen reference works to supplement the basic 20 sources--e.g., literature guides, travel guides, and law dictionaries--are discussed. A checklist with titles of 17 Maine and local community resources concludes the guide. (SD)

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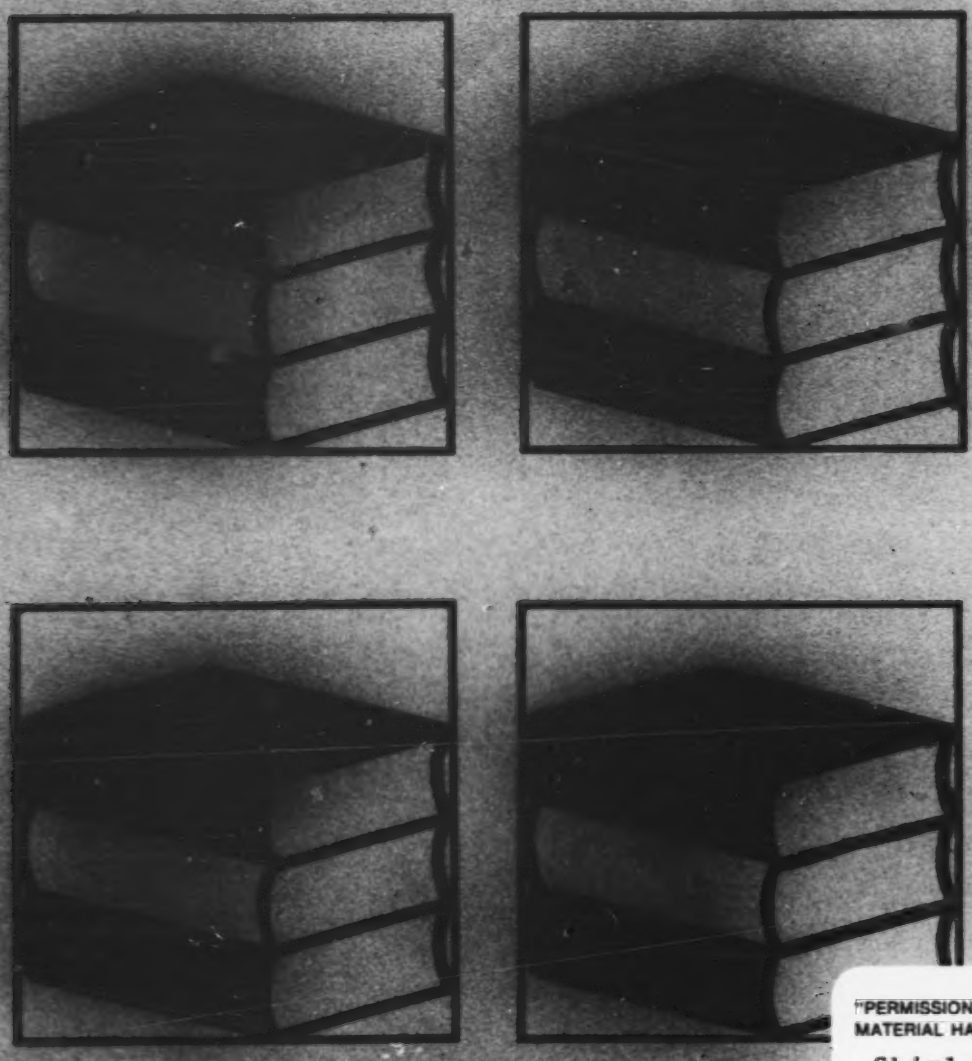
A BARE BONES REFERENCE COLLECTION FOR SMALL AND MEDIUM-SIZED PUBLIC LIBRARIES IN MAINE



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Introduction

"A Bare Bones Reference Collection" list has been compiled to offer Maine librarians who serve communities with the resources of small or medium-sized libraries a starting point to assess their reference collections for breadth and depth. Initially based on a list distributed by the Vermont Department of Libraries in 1987, material was evaluated according to its timeliness, effectiveness in responding to frequently asked questions, and reasonable cost. It should be noted that this document requires frequent updating and it is the hope of this committee that efforts will be made to keep this a vital and useful resource.

This document was prepared by the Southern Maine Library District Reference Study Committee:

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Suggestions and comments are welcome. Please send to the Southern Maine Library District, 5 Monument Square, Portland, Maine 04101.

A BARE BONES REFERENCE COLLECTION
REFERENCE SOURCES FOR SMALL AND MEDIUM-SIZE LIBRARIES IN MAINE
1988

In any public library, large or small, a reference collection helps answer quick questions and is the basis for further research.

Designating an item as "reference" usually means that it does not circulate. Thus, the reference collection should be relatively small, especially in a small library. Before you make a book "reference", consider how important it is that the book be there when needed. If another reference source is just as effective and efficient at answering questions, perhaps the book in question should circulate.

Reference books should be chosen using the same standards as other nonfiction: accuracy, authoritativeness, appropriateness to the collection and its users, format, lack of bias, point of view, and most of all, currency. In addition, reference books should be easy to use. Thorough indexing and cross-referencing help patrons find information readily.

Several of the materials on this list are available in various editions. Although you may prefer a hardcover edition, paperbacks are often appropriate in the reference collection.

In selecting the books from this list be sure to first analyze your specific community's needs. The size of your community and your library's resources will help you determine how comprehensive your purchase plan should be. Use information from past reference questions. In addition, try to anticipate future needs.

Three Basic Tools

The majority of small public library reference questions can be answered with three tools:

1. A multi-volume encyclopedia, no older than five years. If your library can only afford one set, a popular writing style and intermediate reading level such as WORLD BOOK (World Book - Childcraft, 1988, 22 vols., $549.00) will be best. If you can afford more than one, stagger replacements and plan to own at least one geared to children and another for adults. (Children: COMPTON'S; Adult: ACADEMIC AMERICAN, AMERICANA, BRITANNICA, COLLIER'S, etc.) Don't try to save money by substituting with a one volume encyclopedia (too little information).

2. The current WORLD ALMANAC AND BOOK OF FACTS (Newspaper Enterprise Association, Inc., annual, $5.95 pap.) to update information in encyclopedias. Alternative titles: INFORMATION PLEASE ALMANAC, ATLAS AND YEARBOOK (Houghton/Mifflin, annual, 1986, $5.95), or READER'S DIGEST ALMANAC & YEARBOOK (Reader's Digest Book of Facts, annual, $8.50). If you find you need more statistical materials, consider THE STATISTICAL ABSTRACT OF THE U.S. (GPO, annual, 1988, $25.00, pap.).

3. An all-purpose dictionary, updated every five years. WEBSTER'S NINTH NEW COLLEGIATE DICTIONARY (9th ed., Merriam, 1985, $15.95), is a good all-purpose dictionary for students and general readers, or THE AMERICAN HERITAGE DICTIONARY OF THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE (Houghton Mifflin, 1982, $15.95), up-to-date with good coverage of modern words and interpretations. In addition, a good unabridged dictionary is essential such as RANDOM HOUSE UNABRIDGED DICTIONARY OF THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE (1987, $79.95) or WEBSTER'S THIRD NEW INTERNATIONAL DICTIONARY (Merriam, 1988, $79.95). Foreign language dictionaries, particularly French here in Maine, will provide solid back-up.

Additional Basics

Several other materials will expand on the information found in the above three tools. Select additional titles as your financial situation and community needs dictate. The following are not listed in order of importance:

4. Telephone directories. You should have all Maine phone books and might want to consider Boston, New York (especially Manhattan), Washington DC, Vermont and New Hampshire, white and yellow pages. These are available, free of charge, from New England Telephone in Burlington, Vermont (1-800-221-8001).

5. Maps. A detailed road map of your area, showing secondary roads and landmarks. A U.S. Geologic Survey (topographical) map of your area ($3.25, available in local bookstores and L.L. Bean's. Also, state maps can be obtained free of charge from the various state tourist agencies).

6. CONSUMER REPORTS ANNUAL BUYING GUIDE, the December issue of the magazine CONSUMER REPORTS (Consumers Union, $16/yr), acts as an annual compilation of test reports, and is one of the most widely requested public library materials. One guide does not usually update another, so keep the last four years' Buying Guides, if you can.

7. A medical guide written for laypeople, such as THE AMERICAN MEDICAL ASSOCIATION FAMILY MEDICAL GUIDE (Random House, 1987, $29.95), or COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY COLLEGE OF PHYSICIANS AND SURGEONS COMPLETE HOME MEDICAL GUIDE (Crown, 1985, $39.95) and a medical dictionary such as MELLONI'S ILLUSTRATED MEDICAL DICTIONARY (Williams & Wilkins, 1985, $24.95).

8. HOW TO AVOID LAWYERS: A STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE TO BEING YOUR OWN LAWYER IN ALMOST EVERY SITUATION by Don Briggs (new revised ed., Garland, 1988, $27.00, paper). This 1,200 page book is easy to read and includes 750 pages of ready-to-use forms.

9. GUINNESS BOOK OF WORLD RECORDS (Bantam, 1988, $4.95, paper). This gives superlatives for fun and quick reference. Older editions will circulate, especially to kids.

10. BARTLETT'S FAMILIAR QUOTATIONS (15th ed., Little, Brown, 1980, $29.45). If you have the 14th edition, keep it also, since the 15th updates but does not include everything in it. Additional title: Stevenson, Burton E. THE HOME BOOK OF QUOTATIONS, CLASSICAL AND MODERN. (10th Ed., Dodd & Mead, 1984, $39.95).

11. RAND MCNALLY ROAD ATLAS: U.S., CANADA, MEXICO (Rand, 1988, $6.95, pap.). Maps of the countries and states can be found in encyclopedias, but road maps are harder to find. Also helpful is a source to help identify place names such as WEBSTER'S NEW GEOGRAPHICAL DICTIONARY (Merriam, revised edition, 1984, $19.95). An all-purpose world atlas, such as THE TIMES ATLAS OF THE WORLD (7th Ed., Times Books, 1985, $139.95) or RAND MCNALLY COSMOPOLITAN WORLD ATLAS (Rand, rev. ed., 1987, $55.00) will further answer geographical questions.

12. WEBSTER'S NEW BIOGRAPHICAL DICTIONARY (Merriam, 1983, $21.95) will help you identify people quickly. Additional title: WEBSTER'S AMERICAN BIOGRAPHIES (Merriam, 1975, $18.95).

13. BENET'S READER'S ENCYCLOPEDIA (Harper & Row, 3rd ed., 1987, $34.50), will assist with literary questions.

14. THE RANDOM HOUSE THESAURUS (Random, 1984, $14.95) will help in identifying synonyms. The dictionary form is easier for the occasional user, but the original format of ROGET'S INTERNATIONAL THESAURUS (4th Ed., T.Y. Crowell, 1977, $12.45) is a good additional purchase.

15. BOOKS IN PRINT (7 volumes, annual, Bowker, 1987-88, $249.95), and, if you can afford it, SUBJECT GUIDE TO BOOKS IN PRINT (4 volumes, Bowker, 1987-88, $179.95), both preferably of the current year and, if possible, no more than two years old. These will be invaluable for interlibrary loan and collection development.

16. ZIP CODE DIRECTORY (U.S. Postal Service). Order through your local post office or U. S. Postal Service (GPO, annual, 1988, $13.00). Revised and reissued each fiscal year.

17. ABRIDGED READER'S GUIDE TO PERIODICAL LITERATURE ($60.00/year through H. W. Wilson Co.). Indexes 63 of the most popular general interest magazines. If your budget allows, you will want to have the full READER'S GUIDE TO PERIODICAL LITERATURE ($110.00/year).

18. PUBLIC LIBRARY CATALOG (Wilson, 8th ed., 1984, $140.00). Annotates 8,000 of the best currently-in-print, adult, non-fiction, English language books.

    CHILDREN'S CATALOG (Wilson, 15th ed., 1986, $72.00). Lists 5,700 of the best currently-in-print fiction and non-fiction titles written for children from pre-school through the sixth grade.

    FICTION CATALOG (Wilson, 1986, $80.00. Includes four annual supplements).

    These sources are excellent for selection, readers' advisory, and weeding.

19. UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT MANUAL 1987/88 (Office of the Federal Register, Superintendent of Documents, National Archive and Records Administration, $20.00/year).

20. INFORMATION U.S.A. by Matthew Lesko (Viking Penguin, 1986) $22.95, paper). Essential guide for direct access to U.S. government experts. Thousands of names, addresses, phone numbers.

Going Further

Current and potential use of your collection should guide your purchases. Keep track of what questions people ask. Is what you have sufficient or do they need more depth? Can you answer them all? If you have potential school-aged patrons, try to find out from teachers and school librarians what will be studied and what topics repeatedly get covered from year to year. Your collection could include the following materials to supplement the 20 above:

21. A writer's manual such as A MANUAL FOR WRITERS OF TERM PAPERS, THESES, AND DISSERTATIONS, by Kate L. Turabian (5th ed., Univ.of Chicago Press, $20.00, $7.95 paper). A guide to suitable style in the presentation of formal papers, term papers, reports, articles, etc.

    In addition, PREPARING THE RESEARCH PAPER by L.F. Dangle & A.M. Haussman, (Prentice Hall, $1.00) a small pamphlet listing necessary information for footnotes, bibliographies, and brief information on writing a term paper.

22. A dictionary of names such as THE OXFORD DICTIONARY OF ENGLISH CHRISTIAN NAMES (3rd ed., Oxford Univ. Press, 1985, $10.95 paper) or DICTIONARY OF FIRST NAMES by Alfred K. Kotlatch (Putnam, 1981, $7.95 paper). Presents names, their variants and their diminutives, with origin, analysis and history.

23. OCCUPATIONAL OUTLOOK HANDBOOK, (GPO, $20.00, paper, biennial). This U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics handbook discusses employment trends and outlook, including nature of work, qualifications, and earning and working conditions for more than 800 occupations.

24. ENCYCLOPEDIA OF ASSOCIATIONS, VOLUME I (22nd ed., Gale Research, 1987, $230.00). National organizations of the U.S. are arranged in 18 subject categories with an excellent key word index.

25. College guides. One-volume guides such as BARRON'S COMPACT GUIDE TO COLLEGES, Cass & Birnbaum's COMPARATIVE GUIDE TO AMERICAN COLLEGE'S, LOVEJOY'S COLLEGE GUIDE, or one of the Peterson's regional college guides, are nearly all available in paperback in a price range of $5.00-$30.00.

26. Antique identification and pricing. THE KOVELS' ANTIQUES AND COLLECTIBLES PRICE LIST (Crown, 1987, $10.95 paper) and WARMAN'S ANTIQUES AND THEIR PRICES (22nd ed., Warman, 1988, $11.95, paper) are two reputable sources for descriptions and current prices for thousands of items.

27. Drug identifier written for the layperson, such as Long, James W., THE ESSENTIAL GUIDE TO PRESCRIPTION DRUGS (Harper & Row, 1988, $12.95, paperback), or Zimmerman, David R. THE ESSENTIAL GUIDE TO NON-PRESCRIPTION DRUGS (Harper & Row, 1983, $27.00).

28. Author information. H.W. Wilson publishes volumes on world authors from the ancient Greeks to the present day. (10 volumes, plus index, Wilson, $571.00). The Wilson volumes are available separately at $35.00-$90.00 per volume.

    Literature guides. The Oxford Companion series such as THE OXFORD COMPANION TO AMERICAN LITERATURE (5th ed., Oxford Univ. Press, 1983, $49.95)and THE OXFORD COMPANION TO ENGLISH LITERATURE (5th ed., Oxford Univ. Press, 1983, $39.95).

29. Home repair guides. COMPLETE DO-IT-YOURSELF MANUAL, Reader's Digest editors (Random, 1973, $21.95); also, THE DO-IT-YOURSELF LIBRARY. Titles include: BASIC HOME REPAIRS ILLUSTRATED, BASIC PLUMBING ILLUSTRATED, BASIC HOME WIRING ILLUSTRATED. (Sunset, 1987, $6.95/volume); also, FIX-IT-YOURSELF MANUAL, Reader's Digest editors. (Random, 1977, $21.95).

30. Car repair manuals such as CHILTON'S. You will want a current auto repair manual, an import car manual, and a truck repair manual. Manuals typically cover 6 or 7 model years retrospectively. Do not discard older editions. Price range for current editions $13.50 - $50.00.

31. Travel guides. Titles such as FODOR'S, for an international perspective, Mobil for a national perspective, and local travel guides (including bed and breakfasts, New England country inns). Price range for current editions $5.95 - $15.95.

32. Games and sports. THE RULE BOOK by the Diagram Group (St. Martin's, 1983, $9.95) or HOYLE'S RULES OF GAMES (NAL, 1983, $7.95 paper).

33. FARMER'S ALMANAC (current year, $2.00, Yankee Books).

34. CHASE'S ANNUAL EVENTS (current edition, Contemporary Books, $24.95).

35. A toastmaster's handbook such as TOASTMASTER'S TREASURE CHEST by Herbert V. Prochnow (Harper & Row, 1979, $16.45).

36. Personal finance guide such as BARRON'S FINANCE AND INVESTMENT HANDBOOK by John Downes (Barron, 1986, $21.95).

37. BLACK'S LAW DICTIONARY (5th ed., West, 1979, $19.95).

38. BACKGROUND NOTES ON THE COUNTRIES OF THE WORLD. (GPO, $56.00/set, annual update $14.00). Basic information on individual countries updated regularly. Additional title: STATESMAN'S YEARBOOK, 1987-88 (St.Martin's, 1987, $55.00).

39. An etiquette book such as EMILY POST'S ETIQUETTE. (Harper & Row, 14th Ed., 1984, $18.45), or AMY VANDERBILT'S COMPLETE BOOK OF ETIQUETTE (Doubleday, Rev. Ed., 1978, $17.95).

Focus On Maine

This checklist of Maine and local resources includes both types of material as well as specific titles that are basic sources for the reference collection.

1. MAINE REGISTER, STATE YEARBOOK AND LEGISLATIVE MANUAL (Tower Publishing, Portland, Maine, annual, 1988 edition, $91.00). Includes information on Maine: Congressional delegation, courts, foreign consulates, federal agencies, State Government, clubs, associations, societies, organizations, media, schools (elementary through college), zip codes, geographical directory and a classified business directory.

2. MAINE MANUFACTURING DIRECTORY (Tower Publishing, Portland, Maine, annual, 1988, $35.00). Includes information on more than 1,900 Maine manufacturing and processing firms.

3. DO YOUR OWN DIVORCE IN MAINE by Divorce Reform, Inc. (Village Press, 1988, Freeport, Maine, $7.50). Revised supplements are published on a regular basis indicating changes in Maine divorce laws. Keep a copy in reference as a backup for the copies which will mysteriously disappear from circulation.

4. MAINE STATE GOVERNMENT ANNUAL REPORT (Department of Administration, Augusta, Maine, ordered from Central Printing Division, Bureau of Purchases, State House Station 91, Augusta, ME 04333 [289-2701],$7.70). Compilation of annual reports from various state department agencies. It documents the administrative and financial structure, activities and accomplishments of the agencies. Also included is an organizational chart of Maine State Government.

5. THE MAINE ATLAS AND GAZETEER (DeLorme Publishing Company, 1988. Yarmouth, Maine, $9.95). An excellent collection of maps covering the entire state of Maine in 70 detailed sections. Included are street maps for selected cities within the state. The gazeteer section gives information on airports, campgrounds, museums, beaches, etc.

6. MAINE SENATE AND HOUSE REGISTER (Maine House and Senate, current year, free from your legislator). State Constitution, rules, directory, and memoranda.

7. Community checklist. Your library should include these types of sources: local histories; local newspapers; annual town reports; directory of town/regional officials and services; publications distributed through local Chamber of Commerce; local government and community publications, studies and reports; local business annual reports; local maps and local telephone books.

ADDITIONAL BASICS

8. THE DICTIONARY OF MAINE PLACE-NAMES by Philip R. Rutherford (The Bond Wheelwright Company, 1982, Freeport, Maine, $9.95). A handy source which lists brief statements as to the origins of many place names including towns, rivers, ponds, islands and hills.

9. THE LENGTH AND BREADTH OF MAINE by Stanley Bearce Atwood (University of Maine at Orono Press, 1977, $5.95). Wealth of information about Maine towns, lakes, rivers, flora, fauna and much more.

10. MAINE BICENTENNIAL ATLAS, Gerald E. Morris, ed. (Portland: Maine Historical Society, 1976, $6.00). Historical atlas.

11. A CITIZEN'S GUIDE TO THE MAINE COURTS by William Coogan (Maine People's Resource Center, P.O. Box 1987, Portland, Maine 04101, $15.00). Describes the types of cases heard in court, the judicial process and the organization of the courts.

12. MAINE SUPPLEMENT OF REAL ESTATE LAW by Paul G. Creteau (Castle Publishing Company, 1986, Portland, Maine, $19.06). Written primarily for the layperson.

13. PROTECTION FROM ABUSE: A GUIDE TO GETTING A COURT ORDER WITHOUT A LAWYER by Karmet J. Hyman (Pine Tree Legal Assistance, 4 Milk St., Portland, Maine 04101, 1986, $5.00). Explains the procedures for people who want protection from abuse by family or household members.

    Pine Tree Legal Assistance also disseminates pamphlets on a broad range of subjects such as adoption, divorce, tenants' rights, small claims court, etc. Contact them for a complete list.

14. DIRECTORY OF MAINE FOUNDATIONS (U.S.M. Center for Research and Advanced Study, Portland, Maine, 1988, $6.50). Source for individual or group funding.

15. Maine periodical indexes. DOWNEAST INDEX (annual, prepared by the Special Collections Department of the Fogler Library at the University of Maine at Orono, $12.00/vol.).

16. MAINE TIMES INDEX (annual, prepared by the Special Collections Department of the Fogler Library at the University of Maine at Orono, $22.00/vol.). Libraries should consider purchasing these indices for the holdings they maintain and/or for interlibrary loan.

17. 1987 MAINE MEDICAL ASSOCIATION ROSTER AND CONSUMERS GUIDE TO MEDICAL CARE (Maine Medical Association, 524 Western Ave., Augusta, Maine 04330, 1987, free).

Remember that your library is not limited to these materials. Contact neighboring libraries as well as your Area Reference and Resource Center for additional information resources.